

LEADERSHIP WESTSIDE



Lighthouse Leaders
3i Leadership Cadre
Next Level Leaders



A COMPONENT OF WESTSIDE'S
"GROW OUR OWN"
STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Developing Leaders. Strengthening Schools.

A Message from the Superintendent



Dr. Andrea Haynes
Assistant Superintendent,
Human Resources and
District Operations

Leadership matters. Strong leadership shapes school culture, supports hardworking staff, and ultimately positively impacts student learning and well-being. Because of that, we believe leadership development should be intentional, thoughtful, and rooted in our district's values.



Dr. Mike Lucas
Superintendent

'Leadership Westside' reflects our commitment to investing in our own teammates and building leadership capacity across our district community. While we value the perspectives that external leaders can bring, we also know that some of our strongest leaders come from within—educators and staff who understand our community, share our values, and are deeply committed to our students.

This booklet outlines Westside's leadership pipeline components and highlights the programs designed to support leaders at different stages of their journey. Together, these programs create clear pathways for growth, provide meaningful professional learning, and help ensure continuity and stability across our schools and district.



Dr. Mark Weichel
Assistant Superintendent,
Teaching and Learning

I am proud of the leaders who participate in these programs and grateful for their willingness to step forward, learn, and serve. Their commitment strengthens Westside today and prepares us well for the future.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Leadership Westside and the people who help move our district forward.

Mike Lucas

A Three-Prong Approach to *Growing Our Own Leaders* in Westside

“Lighthouse Leaders Cohorts”

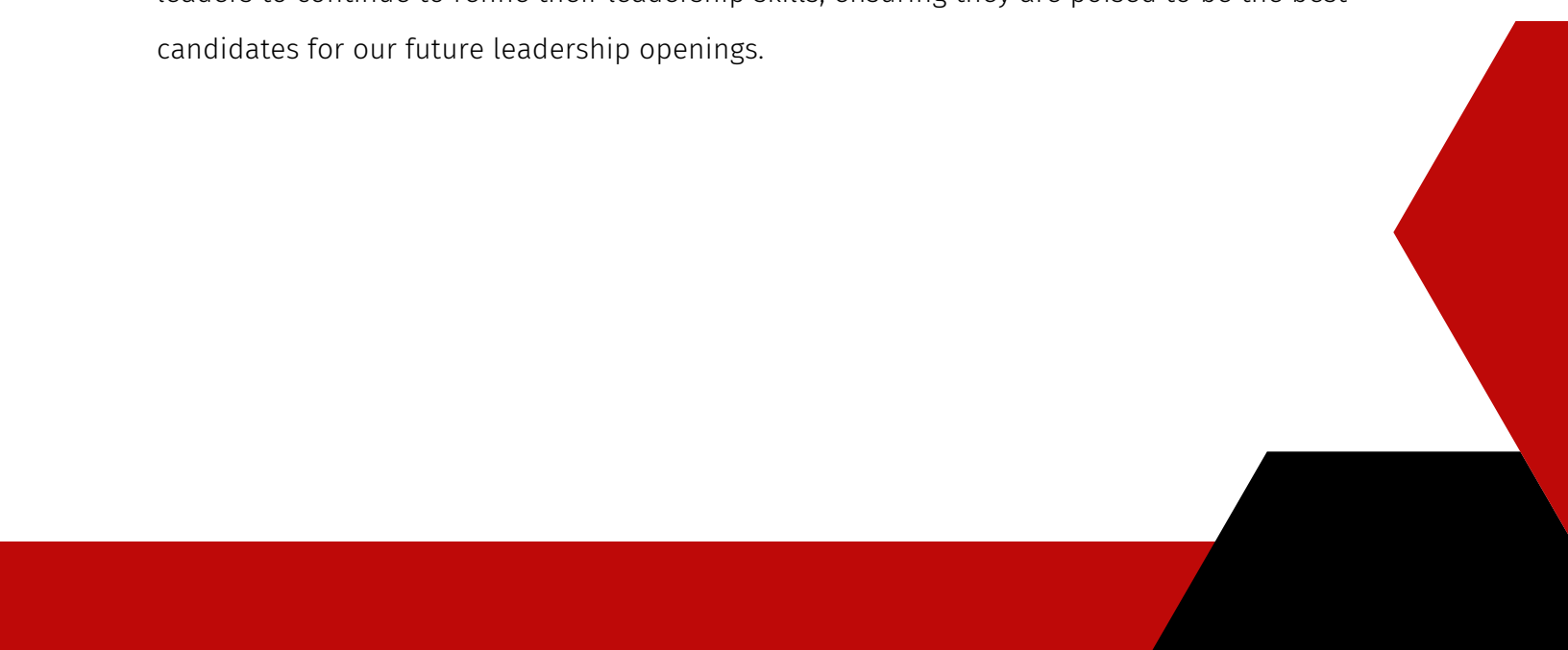
Intentional programming designed to assist current certified staff, aspiring to be leaders, to develop, grow, and refine their own building and district-level leadership skills - thereby, creating a pipeline of well-trained leaders who know the "Westside Way" and are committed to our core values.

“3i Leadership Cadre”

The Westside 3i Leadership Cadre (individualize, innovate, include) is designed to turn aspiring, certified special education leaders into collaborative experts with a deep understanding of high-leverage practices in special education. Participants will increase knowledge and implementation of effective practices for comprehensive student programming.

“Next Level Leaders Professional Development”

A rigorous and focused professional learning training program designed for our current "assistant/introductory" leaders (assistant principals, coordinators, and deans), as we prepare them to be the next Building Principals and Directors of departments for Westside Community Schools. Here in Westside, we are life-long learners and this program allows our developing leaders to continue to refine their leadership skills, ensuring they are poised to be the best candidates for our future leadership openings.



Lighthouse Leaders Cohorts

Lighthouse Leaders is an innovative leadership pipeline program that brings together a select group of certified staff members who have earned, or are actively pursuing, a graduate degree in Educational Administration and/or Educational Leadership leading to a Nebraska Administrative Certificate. Participants are intentionally selected based on their demonstrated commitment to teacher leadership, professional growth, and continuous learning.

Lighthouse Leaders consists of three main components:

1. Leadership Workshops
2. Strengths-Based Leadership Sessions
3. Job-embedded leadership opportunities



"I was excited to have an opportunity to be a part of the Lighthouse Leadership program. When I started in the district 13 years ago, I heard that they had this program in the past, so I was honored to be a part of it when the District brought it back. Through the Lighthouse Leadership program, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a leader in the district. I was able to gain a deeper understanding of my strengths while also learning how to apply them to leadership. This experience empowered me to grow as a leader and serve Westside Community Schools in a meaningful way."

-Emily Vlcek

Dean of Students Westside High School

"I am so thankful that Westside has the Lighthouse Leaders program. Being a part of this cohort has given me valuable insight into the leadership expectations for Westside, provided opportunities for hands-on learning and personal growth, and helped me make connections with staff members from around the district who are also looking to move into leadership roles."

-Camille Akers ~ 6th Grade Teacher and Elementary ELA Co-Chair

3i Leadership Cadre

The 3i Leadership Cadre exists to intentionally cultivate leadership within special education by developing educators who are ready to think systemically, lead collaboratively, and influence practice beyond their individual classrooms or roles. This cadre brings together special education teachers who are eager to grow as leaders, strengthen partnerships across teams, and help shape a coherent, high-quality special education experience for students and families within Westside.

Participants increase their knowledge of High Leverage Practices, including:

- Effective collaboration and planning with general educators
- Strategies for meaningful participation in the general education classroom
- How to choose and implement effective accommodations and modifications
- Promote prosocial behaviors



"Throughout the 3i Leadership Cadre, I gained the tools and strategies necessary to take a more intentional approach to lesson development and collaboration. This experience allowed for more efficient, effective conversations centered on best supporting our students, utilizing high-leverage practices and adhering to Rule 51. By sharing these insights with my team, I was able to serve as a resource for my building, a process that has ultimately pushed me to become a stronger educator."

-Heidi Hansen

Special Education Facilitator

Next Level Leaders

Next Level Leaders is offered as part of an annual professional learning sequence to our current "assistant/introductory level" administrators (APs, Deans, Coordinators, etc) who aspire to lead their own buildings and/or Departments one day, within Westside. The program is designed to prepare participants for future building-level and district-level leadership roles within Westside Community Schools.

Next Level Leaders runs on a 3-year cycle:

- Year 1 - Whole Group- District-level leadership leads professional learning sessions
- Year 2 - Small Group- Directors and Senior Leadership lead small groups into a deeper dive of a topic. Next Level Leader participants have input on which small group they would like to join.
- Year 3 - Individual: Next Level Leaders are matched with a Principal, Director, or Senior Leadership member for individual mentoring throughout the year. The partnerships meet periodically throughout the year.



“Leadership grows best in community, where no one has to lead alone. The Next Level Leaders program at Westside invites us into a shared space to grow—building meaningful relationships, learning from one another, collaborating, and reflecting together. Here, we are encouraged to step forward and imagine new leadership opportunities ahead.”

-Kerri Lewis
Assistant Principal
Hillside Elementary

Leadership Westside: Growing from Within

Leadership within Westside is built with intention. It is supported through learning and strengthened through experience. While we value the perspectives that external leaders can bring, our multi-faceted leadership pipeline is rooted in the belief that growing leaders from within is key to our district's long-term success.

Whether participants are just beginning to explore leadership, deepening their impact as teacher leaders, or preparing for administrative roles, each program plays a vital role in sustaining a strong, values-driven district.

Together, these programs:

- Build leadership capacity from within
- Promote continuous learning and reflection
- Strengthen alignment between classroom practice, school leadership, and district priorities
- Ensure continuity, stability, and excellence for our students and staff

Leadership in Westside is grounded in a deep commitment to excellence. By growing our own high-quality leaders, we honor our past, strengthen our present, and intentionally shape our future.

Leadership Westside is how we invest in our teammates today to lead Westside forward tomorrow.



Lighthouse Leaders Cohort 25/26

LEADERSHIP WESTSIDE



WESTSIDE
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

HUMAN RESOURCES